



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 15, 2021

Democrat House Majority Shrinks Again as Republican Julia Letlow Is Sworn in

With an agenda full of progressive hopes and dreams, the Democrats are already on pretty thin ice when it comes to their tenuous majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. That ice got a little bit thinner on Wednesday as Dr. Julia Letlow, another member of the GOP, was sworn into office.

Letlow won a special election in March to take over Louisiana's 5th District, a seat which was formerly held by her late husband, Luke Letlow, who died last September after a bout with the COVID-19 virus.



AP Images

Letlow's victory gives the GOP 212 seats, just six shy of the Democrats' 218. Since ties fail in the House, Democrats may lose no fewer than two votes (giving them a 214-216 majority) for legislation — which, as of last night, may include court-packing — to pass, should no one in the Republican Party break ranks.

In brief remarks after the swearing-in ceremony, Letlow mentioned her late husband: "I want to thank him for paving the way for me."

"Too many families like mine have experienced tragedy because of this pandemic," Letlow said. "To those families: I see you, I hear you. And most importantly, I pray with you."

Letlow's three-year-old son, Jeremiah, [stole the show](#) with his bow tie and by mimicking his mother during the swearing-in ceremony.

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The 40-year-old Letlow has a Ph.D. in communications from the University of South Florida and was endorsed by former President Donald Trump. Letlow received more than 64 percent of the vote in a nonpartisan blanket primary, which meant that she avoided a run-off election by Louisiana rules.

Letlow is the first female Republican to be elected to Congress by the people of Louisiana. She is expected to sit on the House Agriculture, Education, and Labor Committees.

The swearing in of Letlow comes just over a week after the passing of 84-year-old Representative Alcee Hastings on April 6, which further narrowed the Democrat majority in the House. Hastings' seat is in Florida's 20th District, which includes both Broward and Palm Beach Counties.

The 20th District is considered a "safe" seat for Democrats, but the seat will go unfilled until Florida's Republican governor Ron DeSantis schedules both a Democrat and Republican primary and a general election for the seat. This is expected to take several months, with the seat, perhaps, unfilled until autumn.



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Democrats should gain another seat back later this month in Louisiana as two Democrats — State Senators Troy Carter and Karen Carter Peterson — will square off to see who will represent Louisiana’s 2nd District, which includes New Orleans. That seat was left vacant when Democrat Cedric Richmond left to work with the Biden administration.

The remaining current vacancies in the House of Representatives are Texas’s 6th District, a Republican seat vacated when Ron Wright died in February; New Mexico’s 1st District, vacated by Democrat Deb Haaland, who left to become Joe Biden’s secretary of the interior; Ohio’s 11th District, vacated by Democrat Marcia Fudge, who left to become Biden’s HUD secretary.

So, if the current parties hold their seats, Democrats should pick up four more seats sometime this year, while the GOP should grab one more.

Meanwhile, Iowa’s 2nd District, which was narrowly won by Republican Mariannette Miller-Meeks, is still being contested by Democrat Rita Hart, who has filed a [petition](#) with the House Administration Committee looking to have the election, which was certified by the State of Iowa, overturned by the House.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said that she could [“see a scenario”](#) in which the House could overturn the Iowa election. Under the terms of the Federal Contested Elections Act, both the House of Representatives and the Senate have final say on whom they ultimately decide to seat.

Both moderate and vulnerable Democrat House members may be reluctant to simply overturn a state certified election without an extremely good reason, as the GOP will obviously — and correctly — paint such a move as a power grab.

Long story short, Letlow’s win is a short-term victory for the GOP at best. But, at the same time, Democrats will have to walk a very thin line behaviorally and legislatively if they have any hope of retaining their majority past 2022.



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